

Low path depopulation

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teered their flocks being depopulated first.

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee recommended this action in late December. Several factors led to the recommendation, including the inability to diagnose lethal forms of the virus in flocks showing mild clinical signs of the disease. Thus, LPAI flocks could be reservoirs of the lethal form of the virus. The committee also expressed a concern that the lethal virus had evolved from the mild form, and feared that if LPAI flocks remained in the area, a recurrence of the outbreak was possible.

Hallowell said the action would create "additional economic problems for poultry farmers with LPAI flocks," but noted that in-

creased federal indemnities approved last week should help in recovery. "This is recognized as an essential step in the total elimination of avian influenza from Pennsylvania and should enable us to recover lost interstate and international markets in much less time," he said.

Federal indemnity payments for LPAI birds will be retroactive to November 9, 1983, when USDA declared an "extraordinary emergency" in Pennsylvania.

Hallowell said the State Agriculture Department will reimburse farmers whose LPAI flocks are depopulated. Under the state's existing \$2 million financial assistance program, farmers are reimbursed for their costs of cleaning and disinfection.

FFA executive-secretary

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Pennsylvania members as they move on to regional and national contests.

Another area of coordination he sees need for improvement is communication from the state association back to each individual FFA member at the chapter level.

"We need to take a good look at ways of keeping the individual members informed of and interested in state activities," Erikson explained.

"Members must feel that they are not only just a chapter member, but part of the overall state group, too."

One area of investigation, according to Erikson, might be the Keystone Farmer magazine, which is issued quarterly and only a limited number go to the chapter level.

"We may need to look at a more frequent type of publication with fresher news that can be directed to more individual members," he said.

As the new post becomes involved in statewide events, such as Activities Week and the Mid-Winter Convention, Erikson would like to see better promotion and publicity of participation by members from throughout the state.

By attempting to involve more media in such statewide events, Erikson hopes to broaden the scope of the positive image of FFA that can be presented throughout the Commonwealth.

"We're not looking at drastic changes in anything that is done,"

Erikson said, "but better coordination and perhaps a fresh approach to some of them."

"After 24 years of FFA involvement, I hope that I can offer something to keep FFA moving ahead in Pennsylvania."

His background includes six years in FFA as a student and 18 years as a vo-ag teacher and advisor. A former New York State FFA officer, Erikson taught in the Lisbon, N.Y. area before coming to Elizabethtown.

He came to Elizabethtown in July, 1979, and has built up both the vocational agriculture program and FFA participation over the past five years.

In the previous 20 years, the Elizabethtown Chapter had seven Keystone Farmers and in the past five years 10 more have been added.

The chapter has also had two recent Keystone Stars — Steve Kauffman in production agriculture and Arlen Keener in agribusiness. Both also received their American Degree.

The chapter has recorded a state and regional proficiency winner in placement in ag production, state dairy proficiency and various judging honors in such areas as dairy products, meats and wildlife.

Last year, the chapter also received the Eastern Region BOAC Award for its continuing work at the Elizabethtown Fairgrounds. The Fair, under Erikson's direction, has been largely transformed back into an agricultural event.

Pa. ram lamb test

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not about to give him away." Dottie says, adding that she has seen rams go for \$50 at the sale. "The rams are simply not cared for well enough, and that's the reason a lot of breeders aren't putting their better rams on test," Alackness charges. "That's ashame because there are a lot of good animals in Pennsylvania."

Tim Fleener is another shepherd who refuses to consign any more of his rams until health conditions are improved. The state president of the Hampshire Sheep Association, Tim and his wife, Sarah, raise about 90 head of purebred Hampshires and Shropshires at their Lancaster farm.

"A couple of years ago we had a lamb on test that didn't make it," Tim says, "and when we brought him home we noticed he had developed a bad cough. He died of pneumonia three weeks later. During the sale we noticed that quite a few of the rams had a similar cough, and we felt that the animals shouldn't have gone out to the public in that condition." The Fleeners also assert that crowding is a problem at the test station, especially in light of the hot weather that coincides with test time.

But not everyone agrees that the PDA's Ram Lamb Test needs overhauling, and York County Extension Agent, Tony Dobrosky, is one man who feels that many of the problems with the test lie with the participating breeders, themselves.

"My concern is that too many breeders seem to be looking at the test as a sales tool rather than a breeding tool," Dobrosky comments. "Those who have accepted the concept of performance testing have benefitted from the test, while those who see it as a way to promote their breed have come away disappointed."

Dobrosky does agree, however, that the test's sale receipts have been disappointing. "Certainly test animals with verifiable records

should be worth more than other animals, but so far I haven't been able to convince breeders to go to the sale and pay a justifiable price."

But the extension agent takes issue with claims of poor health care and inadequate promotion. "Some people seem to view this test as a sales gimmick, and when their animals don't bring enough money, then it's the test center's fault. Any time you bring young animals together from different areas and expose them to organisms for which they have no immunity, you're going to have some health problems, but the University vets are walking those pens once a day, and sometimes more in an effort to keep disease to a minimum."

Robert Kimble, who stepped aside last year as director of the test, agrees that some respiratory problems have been encountered, but emphasizes that steps have been taken to help minimize the problem. Most recent health measures include tests conducted by the National Animal Disease Laboratory in Ames, Iowa, and the installation of two large fans in the test center to keep air moving.

Kimble discounts charges of crowding by pointing out that, for the past three or four years, the test has been conducted in the large bull test wing, providing more than enough room for the ram lambs.

"During the past 17 years, it's been my experience that the combination of warm weather, young animals from different areas, and a high-energy ration unlike what the animals received at home, will lead to some health problems in all livestock, not only sheep," Kimble countered.

"Concerning the price issue," Kimble continued, "I think you'll find that prices were low elsewhere last year, and that includes the Keystone Stud Ram and Ewe sale, as well as the sale at Mercer that preceded ours."

Penn State veterinarian, Dr. Lester Griel, admits that the test

has had a few more coughing lambs than he would like to see, but he reports no bad outbreaks of acute pneumonia.

"Last year we did have some work done out in Ames on the coughing problem," Dr. Griel reports, "but the results of those studies aren't in yet."

In defense of sale prices, the vet pointed out that the majority of purchasers thus far have been commercial sheep people who typically are not willing to pay as high a price as the purebred breeders.

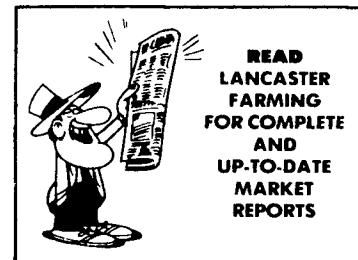
One such commercial operator who has been pleased with the ram lamb test is Bill Free, of East Berlin. Along with his wife, Jean, Bill raises a flock of 200 ewes, including the Rambouillet, Finnish and Dorset breeds.

The Frees have been using their six-year-old Dorset ram, acquired through the test sale, with good results. Last spring the Dorset ram, along with two Suffolk rams, (a breed that prefers fall breeding) were placed with the ewes, and the resulting fall lamb crop was 95 percent white-faced animals from the Dorset.

"We feel the test is worthwhile," Mrs. Free stressed, "and we wouldn't hesitate to buy at the ram lamb test sale again."

But if enough breeders can't be found to enter their lambs, there won't be any performance tested rams for buyers such as the Frees, come sale time in September.

The Sheep Technical Committee, made up of breeders and University personnel, will decide the fate of this year's test next week.



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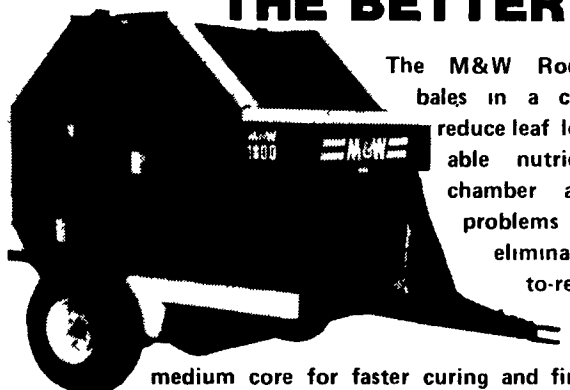
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